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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Iran
- [1](#)3. U.S.-Israel Relations

Key stories in the media:

The media reported that PM Olmert, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, and

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni are scheduled to meet today to discuss a proposed Egyptian-brokered cease-fire with Gaza militant groups or a military operation. Israel Radio says that if the three reach a decision, it will be reviewed by senior military and intelligence officials tomorrow. In its lead story, Maariv reported that Israel is postponing its major ground operation in Gaza. Maariv reported that fearing that the opportunity to release Shalit may be missed, the defense establishment and PM Ehud Olmert are inclined to favor a truce and the possibility of a limited operation in Gaza. Yediot reported that the IDF is reducing its activity in Gaza and that it would take two weeks to prepare a military operation there.

All media reported that yesterday, two years after Gilad Shalit was kidnapped by Palestinian militants, his family was given a letter. Yediot and Israel Radio cited assessments that it was dictated by Hamas and that Hamas sent it through the office of the Carter Center in Ramallah. Although the family has not released its content nor said when it had been written, Ha'aretz reported that the abducted soldier's father Noam told the newspaper on Monday that in the letter Gilad begs for his life and requests that efforts be made to secure his release as soon as possible. Ha'aretz reported that Noam Shalit added that the new sign of life is not evidence of any progress in talks to free his son. Yediot bannered an alleged sentence in Gilad's letter: "I am in a bad condition; save me; don't abandon me; I want to get home soon." Ha'aretz quoted a senior Jerusalem source as saying that the letter is believed to be part of Hamas efforts to achieve a cease-fire with Israel in Gaza. The source added that Hamas is attempting to frame the move as a goodwill gesture, and that the Islamic militant group hopes it will lead Israel to drop its demand that negotiations for Shalit's release be included in talks for a Gaza truce.

Yesterday Ha'aretz reported that the U.S. has proposed holding trilateral talks with Israel and the Palestinians in order to accelerate negotiations on the core issues. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority have expressed reservations about this idea, in light of their commitment to the principle of direct bilateral negotiations. Media quoted chief PA negotiator Ahmed Qurei as saying over the weekend that the parties have started drafting documents that could form the basis for a peace agreement. The media reported that Qurei told Palestinian reporters: "The borders [of the Palestinian state] will include East Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea, as well as the no-man's land that existed before 1967, such as the area of Latrun.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel is expected to transfer some tax funds to the PA today, after holding up the money for a week. The transfer was stopped after Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad called on the EU and OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) not to upgrade their relations with Israel. Israel will deduct some 70 million shekels (around \$20.7 million) from the PA's money to cover debts and transfer some 180 million shekels (around \$53.3 million) of the 250 million shekels (around \$74 million) in taxes that it collects for the PA. Ha'aretz reported that a senior Israeli official blasted Fayyad, saying: "He stabbed Israel in the back." Relations between Israel and the PA have been tense in the last few days due to Israel's withholding the Palestinians' tax money. Holding up the money has caused several days' delay in paying wages to some 150,000 Palestinians employed by the PA.

Ha'aretz reported that Congress is moving forward with a new military aid package to Israel a year after President Bush agreed to a 25 percent increase. Ha'aretz reported that political and defense sources in Israel had said that the main reason for the delay stemmed from concerns among Democrats that the additional defense aid would be credited to the Republicans during a major election year. Ha'aretz reported that it had been hoped in Israel that the increased assistance would begin flowing as early as October 2008.

Israel Radio quoted Oslo Accords architect Dr. Ron Pundak as saying: "There is a chance, perhaps for the first time, of reaching an actual agreement on a declaration of principles, an [unofficial] agreement with general details, with the Palestinians."

Leading media reported that a Palestinian woman, 57, was badly injured and her husband and another relative were battered, in an assault by masked Israeli settlers in the southern Hebron Hills

yesterday. Ha'aretz reported that the police are investigating whether the Israeli attackers hailed from the West Bank settlement of Susia, as the injured Palestinians claim.

The media reported on an initial hike in the world price of oil following Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz's comment to Yediot over the weekend that Israel must attack Iran. The media quoted Iran's Defense Minister, Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, as saying that Iran's response would be painful. Media reported that officials in the security establishment have sharply criticized Mofaz's warning.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the yesterday the PA appealed to the U.S. to intervene to stop Israel from attacking Gaza in response to the rocket attacks.

Yediot reported that Kadima is freezing its primaries. The newspaper quoted Labor Party chairman Ehud Barak as saying privately that Olmert must quit his job immediately.

Ha'aretz and other media quoted diplomatic sources in Ankara and Jerusalem as saying that indirect negotiations between Israel and Syria are expected to start on Thursday in Istanbul. Ha'aretz quoted Olmert as saying during discussions in recent days with aides and experts on Syria from academia and the defense establishment: "We must present the Syrians with the alternative for peace, and not only the possibility for war and international isolation." Ha'aretz says that Olmert has decided that talks on the basis of the principles of the 1991 Madrid Conference represent the best possible scenario. Ha'aretz reported that Olmert is convinced it is possible -- but also a must -- to decouple Syria from the radical axis led by Iran. Ha'aretz reported that in talks with aides, Olmert reiterates that "Syria must be faced with a different alternative." Olmert was quoted as saying that during the past year no one has offered the Syrians anything except international isolation, and that is why they stayed close to Iran and Hizbullah. Ha'aretz reported that Syrian State TV likened Olmert to Hitler.

All media reported that on Sunday a Palestinian youth was caught at a West Bank checkpoint carrying six pipe bombs and a magazine. Over the weekend media reported that on Friday the IAF attacked a Hamas position in northern Gaza, injuring at least 15 Palestinians. In a different incident, one gunman was killed and two were wounded during a battle with Israeli ground troops in northern Gaza. Also on Friday morning, an IDF soldier who was part of a team of military engineers working near the Gaza border was injured when the force came under fire from a Palestinian sniper.

Ha'aretz reported that French President Nicolas Sarkozy will try to promote a diplomatic resolution to the Sheba Farms issue.

Ha'aretz reported that today the Knesset's Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee will move through the final stages of legislation to amend the law of interrogation of suspects that would exempt police from documenting security investigations by video. The newspaper reported that human rights organizations are wondering what law enforcers have to hide.

Ha'aretz reported that Israeli Arabs will distribute 20,000 booklets on the Nakba outside of schools in Arab communities throughout the country. A camera crew from the Qatar-based Al Jazeera television network will cover the handing out of the booklets tomorrow at 11 A.M. (04:00 EDT). The booklets, which were written by 150 Palestinian children in Israel, the Palestinian territories, and Syria and Lebanon, are part of an initiative by the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Development Studies (ICDS) in the northern town of Tamra to "reaffirm Palestinian consciousness, and maintain and reinforce it among future generations." Dr. Asad Ghanem, the chairman of the ICDS and a senior faculty member at the University of Haifa, told Ha'aretz yesterday that the move carries a double message -- that the Palestinians are one people with one Nakba, and that the standing of the Palestinians in Israel supports the Palestinian national movement. The booklets have been criticized by some Israeli Arab educators for not providing an Israeli side of events.

Leading media quoted Ron Prosor, Israel's Ambassador to the UK, as saying in an opinion piece in today's Daily Telegraph that "Britain has become a hotbed for radical anti-Israeli views and a haven for

disingenuous calls for a one-state solution, a euphemistic name for a movement advocating Israel's destruction." Singling out the academia and the media, he was quoted as saying: "Israel's military reaction to the attacks it faces is given in depth, microscopic coverage. Yet the attacks to which Israel is responding are often ignored. The average British citizen is painfully unaware that since Hamas seized control of Gaza last year, 1,400 rockets and 1,500 mortar bombs have landed on Israeli soil."

The Jerusalem Post reported that Dr. Mordechai Paldiel, the former director of the Department of the Righteous at Yad Vashem has expressed his dissatisfaction with Yad Vashem for an "unreasonable" delay in bestowing the title of Righteous among the Nations on the first Arab nominated for the award.

Ha'aretz reported that the Interior Ministry has set up a unit to question and investigate refugees from Africa -- the GOI's first big step to deal with the wave of migrants entering from the southern border. The move comes after the state predicted that refugees will continue to arrive in the next few years and nothing can be done to stop them.

----- 1. Mideast: -----

Summary: -----

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: "A large-scale military operation in the Gaza Strip, despite Olmert and Barak's statements last week, does not appear to be likely in the immediate future."

Liberal columnist and anchor Ofer Shelach wrote in Maariv: "Those who believe that the current talks [with the Palestinians] are a flight to nowhere -- and those who think otherwise -- must ask themselves how Israel prepares itself for the day when everything explodes."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Israeli policymakers need to enunciate a 'River-to-Sea Doctrine' declaring that this country will not tolerate on territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan any foreign power that threatens the security of the Jewish state."

Block Quotes: -----

1. "Collision Course"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (6/10): "Israel and Hamas are on an inevitable collision course; a large-scale military operation at present will only cause more damage than benefit; a large-scale military operation at present is liable to scuttle a unique opportunity to bring Gilad Shalit back home and could result in the absolute termination of all contact with his captors. Those three fundamental working assumptions are shared by most of the Israeli decision-makers and most of the security officials.... There is no majority in the security cabinet in favor of the truce proposal in its current format.... [However], judging by the looks of things, a large-scale military operation in the Gaza Strip, despite Olmert and Barak's statements last week, does not appear to be likely in the immediate future."

II. "The Third Intifada Is Coming"

Liberal columnist and anchor Ofer Shelach wrote in Maariv (6/10): "Most Israelis view current Israeli-Palestinian negotiations as something between an illusion and an exercise in insignificance.... What will happen on the day the talks blow up? After Netanyahu is elected, after all cover-up attempts flounder, after even Abu-Ala [Ahmed Qurei] and Livni give up? What will happen when the first Palestinian throws a stone at a roadblock, followed by many others?.... The face of the third Intifada will be different from the second's. It can bring about Hamas's political takeover of the West Bank, the enrollment of new publics in the armed struggle, and

many unpredictable developments. Those who believe that the current talks are a flight to nowhere -- and those who think otherwise -- must ask themselves how Israel prepares itself for the day when everything explodes."

III. "A Unifying Doctrine"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (6/10): "Israeli policymakers need to enunciate a 'River-to-Sea Doctrine' declaring that this country will not tolerate on territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan any foreign power that threatens the security of the Jewish state. Once approved by the cabinet, this principled national policy statement would be brought to the Knesset for bipartisan ratification and enshrined not as the policy of a particular prime minister, but as state policy. Fulfilling this doctrine, the IDF could then be directed to topple the Hamas regime by whatever stratagem works best. And an exit strategy? Once the top echelon of the Islamist leadership is eliminated, its forces decimated and the structures associated with it razed, the way would be paved for the Palestinian Authority to resume control over the area; for international aid to flow more smoothly and, with any luck, for the process of rebuilding and rehabilitation to begin.... In pursuit of war or peace, a doctrine like this would harmonize the will of the people, the policies of the government and the strategy of the military. And it would send an important message to the international community about where Israel draws its red lines."

12. Iran:

Summary:

Former Ambassador to the U.S., former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Minister of Defense Moshe Arens wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "There is probably no way of stopping our politicians from exploiting [the Iranian nuclear threat], especially any time that Ahmadinejad gives them an opening by uttering another one of his threats against Israel. But keep America out of it."

Block Quotes:

"Superfluous and Harmful Talk"

Former Ambassador to the U.S., former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former Minister of Defense Moshe Arens wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (6/10): "Talk [about the Iranian nuclear threat] is not going to avert this danger. Whatever needs to be done is best done without publicity. But the subject is irresistible to Israeli politicians. It is grist for their mills and serves internal political purposes.... This kind of talk, superfluous and useless, may be no more than the usual scare-mongering the Israeli public has become used to. But the declarations from our leadership about the urgent need for the United States to act to avert the Iranian nuclear threat are downright harmful, especially when they are made in the U.S. They are harmful to the crucial U.S.-Israeli relationship, because they create the impression that Israeli leaders are trying to drag the U.S. into a military adventure in Iran.... What is more, the public calls from Israeli leaders that it is high time for the U.S. to do something about the Iranian nuclear project are less than useless. The American leadership is well informed about what the Iranians are doing, and while there may be some differences between Israeli and U.S. intelligence on that subject, the comparisons are best made secretly. It is true that nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran constitutes a danger not only to Israel and the Middle East, but also to the rest of the world, and therefore to America's interests. But the Americans will do whatever they consider to be in the best interest of the U.S. You can depend on that. No amount of urging by Israeli politicians is going to change their decision.... There is probably no way of stopping our politicians from exploiting this subject, especially any time that Ahmadinejad gives them an opening

by uttering another one of his threats against Israel. But keep America out of it."

13. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Olmert is not an Israeli asset in Washington; he's an albatross around its neck. The Bush administration awards him no preferences."

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Obama's speech was ... simplistic ... but nevertheless it is second to none in terms of its importance and contribution to Israel in this time."

Editor-in-Chief Amnon Lord wrote in the editorial of the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe: "[Obama's] unguarded friendship to Israel should not be doubted....]But] if he is elected in November this will be a most negative development

Block Quotes:

1I. "Not a Gift and Not a Farewell"

Defense commentator Amir Oren wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (6/10): "Israelis were informed last week that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert received a farewell gift from U.S. President George W. Bush: the magnificent F-35 Lightning Strike Fighter. Indeed, it was claimed as a huge gain by Olmert's army -- [his] team of [public relations] advisers.... In any case, defensive and economic considerations behind the sale of F-35s have no relation to the identity of presidents in Washington or prime ministers in Israel.... Olmert is not an Israeli asset in Washington; he's an albatross around its neck. The Bush administration awards him no preferences.... His situation can only worsen during the

investigations carried out in New York, which may produce more evidence. In the coming weeks, the police will weigh the evidence and release their recommendation on whether to submit an indictment.

If Olmert has not stepped down or been ousted by then, it will be his cue to say goodbye."

II. "The Gift of the Speech"

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (6/10): "From any other candidate [Obama's] statements [at the AIPAC Conference] would be received as pandering for the Jewish vote, as proof of the imperious might of the pro-Israeli lobby and as yet another particularly jarring manifestation of the subordination of American politics to Israeli interests. But those accusations cannot be made against Obama. After all, he is the admired leader, the primary model of a different kind of politics: clean, transparent, principled politics that does not capitulate to pressure groups and big money. Obama, after all, was elected as the Democratic Party's candidate for president (even though to say he was 'elected' is an overstatement: Obama received fewer votes than Hillary Clinton and lost to her in all the major states), because he dared to say what he believed without a second thought. One cannot, therefore, cast any doubt about the sincerity of his love of Zionism and Israel, as it was powerfully expressed in his speech to AIPAC, without casting doubt on the man himself and his entire route to the Oval Office. And that is something that must not be done. Obama's speech was superficial, simplistic, one-sided, comprised of points that failed to create a cogent argument, was rife with slogans, clichés and exclamation marks -- but nevertheless it is second to none in terms of its importance and contribution to Israel in this time -- a very banal yet historic speech."

III. "President Obama -- a Negative Development"

Editor-in-Chief Amnon Lord wrote in the editorial of the

nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (6/10): "If Barak Obama becomes president, this isn't just a symbolic affair.... His unguarded friendship to Israel should not be doubted.... [But] if he is elected in November this will be a most negative development.... This would at once lower pressure on Iran.... The pro-Iranian forces in Europe view America as a threat against Europe and the world. They apparently have a good cause to bless Obama's candidacy. They will have a good cause to celebrate his accession to the presidency."

JONES